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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [KWMN](#) [XL](#)
SUBJECT: Embassy Bridgetown Nomination for 2010 Secretary's Award for
International Women of Courage

REF: STATE 111471

¶1. With the concurrence of the U.S. Embassy Bridgetown country team, I am pleased to nominate St. Vincent and the Grenadines civil society and human rights activist Anesia Octavia Baptiste for the 2010 Secretary's Award for International Women of Courage. Ms. Baptiste, an outspoken, effective and consistent advocate for the rights of her fellow citizens, has displayed personal courage and commitment in advocating positions opposed by either the government and the opposition, most recently as an active leader in a "Vote No" movement designed to inform citizens of the possible negative affects of enacting a new constitution that will be voted upon via referendum this year. She has also worked to guarantee that the rights of women are fully considered as the constitutional reforms are debated.

¶2. The referendum on a new constitution is the first of its kind in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It could, inter alia, turn the multi-island nation into a presidential republic, and has spurred much debate within St. Vincent. It has also engendered concern that basic voter rights, including voter education, confidence in the reform process, and transparent registration techniques, are being marginalized by those in the leftist-leaning administration who are lobbying hard for a "yes" vote. Throughout her campaign, Ms. Baptiste has organized and led speaking tours, letter writing campaigns, media events, and town hall meetings to ensure voters are well informed ahead of the referendum -- all with little to no support from other non-governmental organizations and while supporting her own familial needs.

ADVANCING FREEDOMS

¶3. Apart from her recent constitutional reform activities, Ms. Baptiste has also worked tirelessly to highlight other important issues, including environmental protection, property rights and HIV/AIDS awareness. As Director of the Thusian Institute for Religious Liberty, a human rights organization that promotes individual rights, including religious freedom, she has coordinated these efforts effectively with other local non-governmental organizations and has used her public visibility to support initiatives that would increase awareness on such issues. From public service announcements calling for active volunteerism to curb pollution and help the needy, to frequent speaking engagements promoting protection to land owners from government takeovers, Ms. Baptiste has fought for the improvement of wide-ranging liberties for all Vincentians. Given her day job as Communications Manager for St. Vincent's Tourism Ministry, Ms. Baptiste runs the risk that she could face retribution in the form of assignment to less

visible and rewarding civil service positions if she continues to speak publicly counter to the political goals of the government.

A KEY SUPPORTER OF U.S. REGIONAL POLICIES AND MISSION PRIORITIES

¶4. Anesia Baptiste embodies the importance we place on democracy and human rights, specifically regarding the right to seek freedoms that should be afforded all citizens, regardless of gender, of any nation. She is an educated, thoughtful and strong-willed individual who has quickly gained the respect of many civil society activists and regional non-governmental organizations. A number of our interlocutors have gone so far as to call her an ideal candidate to lead her country, with some calling her St. Vincent's "Rosa Parks." And despite the heavily patriarchal society in which Ms. Baptiste lives and operates, her admirers have spanned gender divides successfully. Her activities have also taken part in a sometimes hostile environment, as evidenced by the alleged wire-tapping and surveillance of her and likeminded colleagues.

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¶5. Though supported by many in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, her efforts have never been recognized by her government or other regional organizations. Being recognized by the Secretary in this manner, at this time, would speak directly to our support for democracy and gender equality throughout the Eastern Caribbean and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines specifically. It would also encourage others to follow suit, creating more opportunities for change and development on a grassroots level.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

¶6. Ms. Baptiste has been contacted regarding the nomination, and has agreed to accept the award if chosen.

-- Full legal name: Ms. Anesia Octavia Baptiste

-- Job Title/Association: Communications Manager, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ministry of Tourism/Director, Thusian Institute for Religious Liberty

-- Date of Birth: 12 August 1980

-- Country of Birth: St. Vincent and the Grenadines

-- Citizenship: Vincentian

-- Address: P.O. Box 2622, Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines

-- Telephone/E-mail: 784-528-1015; 784-432-5268 /
anesiarichards@gmail.com, thusian_ar@hotmail.com

-- Passport Number: R0034900

-- Language(s): English

¶7. The Embassy point of contact for this nomination is Political/Economic Officer Jamal Al-Mussawi. Mr. Al-Mussawi can be

reached via e-mail at Al-MussawiJA@state.gov or by telephone at
246-227-4237.
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